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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Letter dated 21 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the Chairman's Summary of the international seminar entitled "Seminar on the Safety of United Nations Peacekeepers and Associated Personnel Working in Conflict Zones", which was held from 15 to 16 March 2001 in Tokyo (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 20 (a) and 86, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yukio **Satoh**
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Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 21 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Seminar on the Safety of United Nations Peacekeepers and Associated Personnel Working in Conflict Zones, Tokyo, 15-16 March 2001

Chairman's Summary

The Seminar on Safety of United Nations Peacekeepers and Associated Personnel Working in Conflict Zones was held in Tokyo on 15 and 16 March 2001 with the participation of the United Nations and other international organizations, as well as representatives of Governments and institutions from 12 countries.

The Tokyo Seminar was the seventh in a series of international seminars under the topic "Challenges of Peacekeeping and Peace Support: Into the Twenty-first Century". The objective of the seminar was to discuss ways and means of enhancing the security of personnel working in the field.

Through the discussions at the seminar, the following were identified as the most important issues to consider.

Issues in the field

There is growing concern that greater importance was attached to political considerations than staff safety and security, and there was insufficient confidence among personnel in the system's ability to provide security. Problems cited were inadequate threat assessment and inadequate attention to preventing abductions and securing release of hostages; the fact that rules of engagement are not uniformly applied; and that communications equipment and logistical support were inadequate. Among the needs cited by participants were: a clear delineation of command and control to Force Commander; a minimization of the distinction between military peacekeepers and associated civilian personnel; trauma and stress counsellors for peacekeepers and associated personnel; and greater coordination with organizations and peacekeeping efforts outside the United Nations, and with personnel in the field from different organizations. It was suggested that each peacekeeping operation force headquarters should have a dedicated "force safety branch" under the control of the Chief of Staff; and that security plans should also cover non-military personnel. Consideration should also be given to the clarification and application of policies regarding dependants, local staff and NGOs.

Issues at United Nations Headquarters

Secretariat

The lack of a clear line of authority or accountability in the management of security within the United Nations system and the need for a coherent security management plan for the system as a whole were discussed. It was suggested that a full-time Security Coordinator should be appointed at the Assistant Secretary-General level with full and system-wide authority, and also that the staff working on mission security issues should be increased. Others suggested that a coordination

body within the Secretariat be established to handle information on the safety of personnel working in conflict zones, with a corresponding body in each field mission in which all components are represented, and that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Force Commander and civil, political and humanitarian representatives should formulate a joint strategy on security. The need for an intelligence cell in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was also cited. In order to achieve closer interaction between the Secretariat and Member States, it was recommended that the Secretariat brief members of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

It was noted that the United Nations Security Coordinator's Office was underfunded, and disappointment was expressed with positions taken by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and in the Fifth Committee with respect to financial support for safety and security measures. The suggestion was made that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations approach ACABQ in this regard, and that core costs of security be covered from the regular United Nations budget. The call was made to resolve the stumbling block in the General Assembly on cost-sharing.

Security Council

There was a perception that peacekeeping operations mandates were not clearly thought out and often resulted in "mission creep", and that the Security Council took decisions that could expose troops to danger without consulting troop contributors. Mandates should be clear and practical, and supported by appropriate forces and equipment. It was suggested that security could be increased if mandates included arrangements for disarmament and demobilization.

Other related issues

Training

The opinion was expressed that there was a need for the United Nations to take training more seriously. Needs cited were: compulsory pre-mission and in-the-field training for all personnel, including civilians, and the development of "best practices"; training in urban warfare; training for all peacekeepers and associated personnel on their legal rights and obligations. It was also suggested that the United Nations should have a training organization with the capability to run its own large-scale courses.

Member States

Member States were called upon to extend appropriate cooperation, including during the planning phase, and were encouraged to ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Public information

The need was cited for constructive management of media to create a more positive image among local populations, and it was suggested that the Trust Fund for Promotion of Public Relations Activities in Peacekeeping be more effectively utilized.